

# Considering Consumer Participation in Affordable Housing Policy

A Focus Discussion with Stakeholder Agencies and  
Organisations for Low Income and Otherwise  
Disadvantaged Housing Consumers



June 2<sup>nd</sup> 2009

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## Welcome and Introduction

- Acknowledgement of Ngoongar Land
- Housekeeping
  - Format of Meeting
  - Break
  - Toilets, emergency exit, facilities
- About Shelter WA
- Purpose of this Meeting
- Introduction of participants (round robin)

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## Why Consumer Participation? Systemic and Environmental

- National Consumer Policy Framework consultation driven by Productivity Commission review 2006 - 2008
- Increasing recognition of the importance of evaluation of programs, policies, goods and services from the perspective of end point service users / consumers
- Quality improvement models point to the need for evidence base to measure 'success and satisfaction'
- Best Practice models consistently refer to inclusion of service users / clients / consumers in the development and review of programs, policies, goods and services

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## Why Consumer Participation? Systemic and environmental

- Well established in other markets – market research, customer orientation, consumer testing, fair trading regulations
- Applied and monitored in non-government agencies by funders
- Not routinely applied to government – particularly absent is the mechanism for funded bodies to voice concerns about the quality of service by funders
- Exception is the WA Non Gov Funding Indexation Policy
- Haphazard by service providers (beggars and choosers?)

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## Why Consumer Participation? Organisational benefits

- Testing the value, usefulness and outcomes for consumers of resources, service and funding provision identifies areas of under and over-resourcing, ineffective and effective targeting of work efforts, barriers and drivers
- Including consumers in decision making delivers a stronger relationship between intended and actual outcomes, consumers 'own' the process and are more likely to be committed to outcomes
- More lasting impact of therapeutic and support service efforts when consultation and feedback utilised

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## Why Consumer Participation? Consumer benefits

- Inclusion in decision making addresses helplessness, hopelessness and powerlessness
- Inclusion in decision making about immediate and personal issues, priority needs and preferred experiences fosters broader social inclusion for marginalised people
- Inclusion in decision making promotes personal empowerment, increased sense of control and efficacy
- Inclusion in decision making encourages social learning, personal development, responsibility and participation

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## Cross Sector

### Consumer Participation Models

- Most government funded program contracts identify consumer participation as an ideal
- Predominantly 'Rights and Responsibilities'
- Many programs include mandatory requirement for agencies to manage client feedback, complaints and grievances as part of a quality improvement framework
- Some agreements require regular testing and providing evidence of customer satisfaction with services received
- Human Rights Framework, accreditation, monitoring

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## Some Examples

- Aged Care – User Rights Principles
- Residential:
  - Security of Tenure
  - Access by Representatives of Care Recipients
  - Access by Advocates and Community Visitors
  - Consistency with Rights and Responsibilities
  - Other responsibilities of Approved Providers of Residential Care
  - Access to Aged Care Services for Complaints Resolution

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## Some Examples

- Aged Care User Rights Principles
- Community Care

#### 23.25 Rights of care recipients

- (1) A care recipient has the following rights:
- (a) to be involved in deciding the community care most appropriate for the care recipient's needs;
  - (b) to be given enough information to help the care recipient make an informed choice;
  - (c) to choose, from the community care available, the community care that best meets the care recipient's needs;
  - (d) to be given a written community care plan of the community care that the care recipient will receive;
  - (e) to receive community care that takes account of the care recipient's lifestyle and cultural, linguistic and religious preferences;
  - (f) to be able to take part in social activities and community life as the care recipient wishes;
  - (g) to be treated with dignity, with the care recipient's privacy respected;
  - (h) to complain about the community care being received, without fear of losing the care or being disadvantaged in any other way;
  - (i) to choose a person to speak on the care recipient's behalf for any purpose.
- (2) The approved provider must not act in a way inconsistent with the care recipient's right to enter into a community care agreement with the provider.

<http://www.comlaw.gov.au/comLaw/Legislation/LegislativeInstrument/Compilation/nsl/01/3/D43C20C3B92C5D4CA25757E0a16882C?OpenDocument>

Accessed 29 May 2009

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# Aged Care Act 1997 Schedule 1

## 21 Rights identified

### Schedule 1 Charter of residents' rights and responsibilities

(sections 23.12 and 23.14)

- A. Each resident of a residential care service has the right:**
1. to full and effective use of his or her personal, civil, legal and consumer rights
  2. to quality care appropriate to his or her needs
  3. to full information about his or her own state of health and about available treatments
  4. to be treated with dignity and respect, and to live without exploitation, abuse or neglect
  5. to live without discrimination or victimisation, and without being obliged to feel grateful to those providing his or her care and accommodation
  6. to personal privacy

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# Aged Care Act 1997 Schedule 1

7. to live in a safe, secure and homelike environment, and to move freely both within and outside the residential care service without undue restriction
8. to be treated and accepted as an individual, and to have his or her individual preferences taken into account and treated with respect
9. to continue his or her cultural and religious practices, and to keep the language of his or her choice, without discrimination
10. to select and maintain social and personal relationships with anyone else without fear, criticism or restriction
11. to freedom of speech
12. to maintain his or her personal independence
13. to accept personal responsibility for his or her own actions and choices, even though these may involve an element of risk, because the resident has the right to accept the risk and not to have the risk used as a ground for preventing or restricting his or her actions and choices

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# Aged Care Act 1997 Schedule 1

14. to maintain control over, and to continue making decisions about, the personal aspects of his or her daily life, financial affairs and possessions
15. to be involved in the activities, associations and friendships of his or her choice, both within and outside the residential care service
16. to have access to services and activities available generally in the community
17. to be consulted on, and to choose to have input into, decisions about the living arrangements of the residential care service
18. to have access to information about his or her rights, care, accommodation and any other information that relates to the resident personally
19. to complain and to take action to resolve disputes
20. to have access to advocates and other avenues of redress
21. to be free from reprisal or a well founded fear of reprisal, in any form for taking action to enforce his or her rights

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## National Disability Service Standards

Strong emphasis on concept of 'social role valorisation'

[www.cplqld.org.au/business/access/file\\_folder/disabilityservicesstandards.pdf](http://www.cplqld.org.au/business/access/file_folder/disabilityservicesstandards.pdf)  
Accessed 29 May 2009

1	Service access	A fair go for everyone
2	Individual needs	Getting help that is right for you
3	Decision making and choice	Having your say
4	Privacy, dignity, and confidentiality	Respecting your privacy
5	Participation and integration	Taking part in the community
6	Valued status	Doing things the community thinks are important
7	Complaints and disputes	Getting something done about a complaint
8	Service management	Running the service well
9	Employment conditions	Your right to fair wages and conditions
10	Service recipient training and support	Learning the right skills for your job
11	Staff recruitment, employment and training	Having staff who know the best ways to help you
12	Protection of human rights and freedom from abuse	Being safe and respected

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## Some Examples

### National principles for SAAP services

State and Territory Governments and the Commonwealth Government have endorsed the following principles for SAAP services. The principles underpin the Western Australian SAAP service standards.

#### User rights

Each consumer has the same rights and responsibilities as all members of the community.

#### Participation and choice

Each service user has the opportunity for maximum participation in decision making about their own lives and the service they receive.

#### Complaints and dispute resolution

Each service user has access to fair and equitable procedures for dealing with complaints and disputes.

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## Some Examples

### Safety and security

Each service user has physical safety and security as a result of their contact with a SAAP service.

### Access to services

Each service users' access to a service is decided on the basis of relative need within the service's target group.

### Information and consultation

Each service user is fully informed about the nature and choice of available services and any rules and conditions that apply, and makes informed choices from the alternatives.

### Privacy, confidentiality and access to personal information

Each service user has the right to personal privacy, privacy in communications and confidentiality of access to service records and information pertaining to them.

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## Some Examples

### Efficient and effective management

Each service user receives the benefit of well planned, efficient and accountable service management.

### Coordinated, planned and reliable service delivery

Each service user receives coordinated, reliable and appropriate planned services which are planned and meet his or her specific ongoing needs and which are both appropriate and responsive and delivered in a culturally responsive manner.

### Responsiveness to all clients

Children in SAAP services are treated as clients in their own right as well as part of their family unit.

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## Some Examples

- Supported Accommodation Assistance Program (SAAP) Service Standards Western Australia 2002
- Direct service provision Standards 1 to 4
  - Standard 1 Access and eligibility
  - Standard 2 Planning and providing support
  - Standard 3 Providing supported accommodation to young people under 18 years who are not with an adult
  - Standard 4 Service provision to children accompanying parents/carers
- Client rights and participation Standards 5 to 9
  - Standard 5 Client responsibilities
  - Standard 6 Privacy and confidentiality
  - Standard 7 Client participation and decision making
  - Standard 8 Complaints procedures
  - Standard 9 Understanding and eliminating barriers
- Service networks to support clients Standard 10
- Service management Standards 11 to 13
- Health and physical safety Standard 14

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## Some examples

- Mental Health
  - Consumer Advisory Groups
- Health Consumers Council and NHMRC
- Primary Health Consumer Boards
- Community Housing Providers – resident committees
- Retirement Village residents associations
- National Tenant Support Network
- Tenants Unions in Victoria, Queensland, ACT
- Housing estate groups (NSW, Vic, Qld)

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## Problems with Consumer Bodies

- Difficult to self advocate when marginalised or experiencing illness, financial limitations, mobility restrictions etc
- Representational problems (do they really represent?)
- Diversity issues (are they reflective of the range?)
- Difficulty generalising qualitative feedback to policy
- Consumer access to crucial (confidential) information
- Consumer tokenism (one lonely voice in the group)
- 'Hijacking' the agenda with specific issues (one overriding voice in the group)
- Resourcing, supporting, remunerating, training
- Selection, recruitment, turnover

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## Tenant groups in WA

- Recent attempt by private individual in WA – 'Tenants United for Rental Fairness' – TURF didn't gain ground
- Council to Homeless Persons
- MATG in WA disintegrated
- Problem advocating 'on behalf of' but hard to advocate 'with'
- 2007/8 survey by WACOSS of service provider agencies identified the lack of access to affordable and appropriate housing for their clients was the largest issue impacting on the provision of support

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## The Way Forward

- There are a range of tenures with households in receipt of government subsidies for housing
- Both public and private tenancies – private rental supports 75% low income households (CRA is 2x CSHA)
- Residential support sectors:
  - Disability
  - Youth
  - Aged
  - Psychiatric
  - Emergency / Crisis including Women's Refuges
- Separate support aspects from accommodation (people issues different to capital and financial aspects)

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## Focus Discussion Questions

- From your knowledge of the sector you are employed in, what are the existing Consumer Participation mechanisms?
- Do these mechanisms report to any overarching governing body or Committee? If so, what are these? To your knowledge has there been any changes in policy or practice resulting from the work of these bodies?
- Do you think there is need for an affordable housing consumer participation and consultative body in WA?
- If so, should an Affordable Housing Consumer Body be a single group comprised of participants across all target groups or should there be a number of different groups representing particular people / affordable housing types / service groups

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